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* " S T. E L M O " *
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* Property of Johnnie Speer*
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" S T. E L M O "

CAST

ST. ELMO LEAD
MURRAY HAMMOND HEAVY
GORDON LEIGH JUVENILE HEAVY
VANDECKER JIGGINS ... COMEDY

EDNA INGENUE
AGNES HAMMOND HEAVY

ACT ONE

SETTING. The Blacksmith shop on Lookout.

ACT TWO

SETTING. Handsome interior of St. Elmo's home, drawing room.

ACT THREE

SETTING . Thensame as Act two.

PROPS

Blacksmith forge
Hammers and tools
Pistols
Cradles
Book
Lunch basket
Papers
Key
Handsome furniture for St. Elmo's home.
Riding whip

" S T. E L M O "

ACT ONE

(AT THE DOOR OF THE BLACKSMITH'S FORGE IN TENNESSEE. VAN JIGGINS A LANKY AND RATHER BOYISH TENNESSEE MOUNTAINEER IS SITTING ON BOX. A RIFLE ACROSS HIS KNEES MENDING IT. HAS SCREW DRIVER IN HAND)

SCENE: BLACKSMITH'S FORGE IN TENNESSEE. VAN JIGGINS A LANKY AND RATHER BOYISH TENNESSEE MOUNTAINEER IS SITTING ON BOX. A RIFLE ACROSS HIS KNEES MENDING IT. HAS SCREW DRIVER IN HAND)

VAN

Thar, I reckon that's all right. I nearly busted the damn old gun, held it too close to a tree, Manufacturin' some new war relics for the Northern Visitors---nearly blew my head off.

EDNA EARLE

(OUTSIDE R. U. E.) (CALLS) Daddy! Oh Daddy---(RUNS ON CROSSES TO CABIN. LOOKS IN) I wonder where daddy can be? (SHE CARRIES A DINNER PAIL)

VAN

Hello, Edna,

EDNA

Oh is that you, Van? I didn't see you.

VAN

That's nothing new---you never do. (LAUGHS)

EDNA

Where's daddy?

VAN

He went over to see Jim Smith to settle an argument about a verse in the scripture.

EDNA

I brought him his dinnerp he must be hungry. (PUTS DINNER PAIL IN CABIN)

VAN

Always thinking of your grand daddy.

EDNA

Who else have I to think of? He's all the world to me.

VAN

I wish I had been born your granddaddy.

EDNA

Why?

VAN

Then you'd think of me. (LAUGHS)

EDNA

Oh, Van, you are too shiftless. You are awful lazy.

VAN

Ah; I aint nuther. I am always thinking.

EDNA

About what?

VANN
My perpetual motion machine.

EDNA
That's some more silly stuff. You've been tinkerin' with that for years now, and how long will it run?

VAN
Eight minutes.

EDNA
Then if you live to be a hundred you can make it run a year.

VAN
Oh you may laugh at me, but I am going to do something big some day. I am going to be a big inventor.

EDNA
You're a stranger creature, Van.

VAN
I am human.

EDNA
(SEES HANDSOME COVERED BOOK ON BOX L. NEAR FORGE) (PICKS IT UP) Where did this book come from?

VAN
Left here by a man who stopped to have his horse shod. He went away and forgot it. Your garrapa says he was a wicked man. Swore like blazes at nothing, and had a vicious look in his eyes. I'll bet it is a bad book.

EDNA
(SEATED ON BOX LOOKING AT BOOK) It has a beautiful cover.

VAN
You can't tell a book by it's cover, nor a man by the clothes he wears. There's many a true heart that beats beneath a ragged jacket. What's the name of it?

EDNA
(READS COVER OF BOOK) Dante's Inferno.

VAN
I've never met him.

EDNA
(LOOKING AT BOOK) It's all about the devil.

VAN
The devil it is! Then you had better burn it; throw it in the forge.

EDNA
Oh no! We don't know whether it's a good book or a bad one. I once heard the minister, Mr. Hammond, say there was a soul in every book.

VAN
If Mr. Hammond says so, it's true.

EDNA
Do you like Mr. Hammond, Van?

VAN
Yep.'

EDNA
He's so good to me, teaches me so many things that are wonderful.

VAN
Oh he thinks you are going to be a great scholar some day. One of the great teachers you heard about in the big towns.

EDNA
Yes, he gives me every encouragement. And he is going to take me to see a lady---Mrs. Murray, who has taken a great interest in me.

VAN
I'll bet your granddaddy is going to lose you.

EDNA
Not while he lives. Do you know Mrs. Murray, Van?

VAN
Nope, but I've heard tell of her. She is awful rich, lives in a big house, and they do say she's not happy because she has a son who is very wicked. His name is St. Elmo Murray.

EDNA
St. Elmo. Have you ever seen him?

VAN
Nope, but they do so say he's wicked. He's a man of great learning--- knows all about things you learn from books---but he laughs and scoffs at preachers, churches and religion.

EDNA
Oh Horrible!

VAN
Once he was a good fellow and everybody liked him, now he hates everybody and they let him alone.

EDNA
Does he stay at home with his mother?

VAN
No, he travels all over creation.

EDNA
I wonder what changed him so sadly?

VAN
Some wrong done him. I never heard the whole story. (GOES UP*

EDNA
(TO HERSELF) St. Elmo. The name has a strange fascination for me and yet I have a horror of the man. (X'S R. LOOKS AT BOOK. ENTER HAMMOND DOWN RUN R. U. E. WEARS A FULL VAN DYKE BEARD AND DRESSED FOR RIDING)

MURRAY HAMMOND
So this is Aaron Hunt's forge?

VAN
Yep!

MURRAY
Is he here? (X'S L.)

VAN
Nope!

MURRAY
When will he be here?

VAN
Can't tell,

MURRAY
You are quite a rustic from the mountains with your "Yep. Nope and
and can't tell"

VAN
Say don't swell up because you are the minister's son.

MURRAY
Ah, then you remember me?

VAN
Yep, I've heard of you.

MURRAY
What have you heard?

VAN
I wouldn't want to repeat it.

MURRAY
And why not?

VAN
There's a young lady here.

MURRAY
Devilish pretty she is too---your sister?

VAN
Nope, the grand daughter of Aaron Hunt. Edna, this is Mr. Hammond the
son of Minister Hammond. Edna is an orphan.

EDNA
(X'S TO HAMMOND) For the sake of your father, I welcome you sir. (EXTEND
HANDS)

MURRAY
(GOES TO RAISE HER HANDS TO HIS LIPS. SHE DRAWS IT AWAY) Pardon me,
is your grand father well and hearty as ever?

EDNA
I fear he is failing---his heart troubles him at times.

MURRAY

If he should pass away, you would be alone in the world?

EDNA

(BOWS HEAD) Yes sir.

MURRAY

I understand that my father is interested in you and predicts for you a brilliant career.

EDNA

Your father has been very kind.

MURRAY

I hope father don't lose his head over you; there is no fool like an old fool. The old gentleman is liable to take the second plunge into matrimony and that would not please me. I would rather call you sweetheart than mother. (TRIES TO TAKE HER HAND)

EDNA

(DRAWS BACK) Excuse me, sir. You are presuming and on the verge of insulting me. But for the sake of the father, I will overlook the son's rude, crude, and ungentlemanly remarks. Good-day, sir. (EXITS QUICKLY INTO CABIN L. 2)

MURRAY

(WHISLES AND X'S R.) She's a game little one. I say Mr.---Mr--- what is your name?

VAN

Van Jiggins.

MURRAY

Oh yes ---Van Jiggins.

VAN

Don't forget it---I am an inventor.

MURRAY

What have you invented?

VAN

War relics, sell them to Northern Tourists---as relics from the battle of Lookout Mountains.

MURRAY

(LAUGHS) Great Scheme!

VAN

You bet your boots. Money in it! Say you just got back from being out west?

MURRAY

Yes, from Colorado where I have spent the last ten years. I expected to meet my father at Chatanooga, but learning he has come out here I followed.

VAN

You be married, where be your wife?

MURRAY

Oh I left her moping at the village inn, while I sought my father and had an interview with him. By jove, the interview was not a pleasant one. There's was no fatted calf for the prodigal's return, not even a cold potato. (LAUGHS)

AGNES HAMMOND

(ENTERS DOWN R. U. E. COMES DOWN RUN SHOWS HER TEMPER) Murray!

MURRAY

Agnes, you here, I thought I told you---

AGNES

Never mind what you told me. I wasn't going to wait at that miserable inn. (LOOKS WITH CONTEMPT AT VAN) While you visited your rustic friend.

MURRAY

Mr. Van Jiggins, this is my wife.

VAN

(BOWS) Glad to meet you, darn if I aint.

~~MURRAY~~ AGNES

(TAPPING GROUND WITH FOOT. SNEERS) Really, thanks.

VAN

Don't mention it. I won't. I guess I had better be moving if you don't mind. Gosh there's blood in her eyes. (EXITS OVER RUN OFF R.)

MURRAY

My dear, when will you learn to control that lovely temper of yours?

AGNES

(X'S) Ah, I'm disgusted with you!

MURRAY

That's an old story; why repeat it? Our love has turned to mutual hate, yet we worry along and lead a cat and dog life. I'm the dog--ph---well, I wish you had married St. Elmo instead of me.

AGNES

(BITTER) You were eager at the time we were married.

MURRAY

Yes, I believe I was. I had two motives--Love and to win you from St. Elmo, though he was my benefactor.

AGNES

Oh drop the subject. Did you see your father? How did he treat you?

MURRAY

Out of sight!

AGNES

What sort of an answer is that?

MURRAY

You asked me two questions, didn't you? Did I see my father? And how did he treated me? I answered you.

AGNES

Yes, but what did he say?

MURRAY

He was rather bitter and reproached me for cowardly robbing his friend of the woman he loved.

AGNES

Did he say much about me?

MURRAY

Only that he blushed to think that you were his dead sister's child.

AGNES

He is bitter. You spoke to him about money?

MURRAY

I did. I requested the loan of a thousand to keep the wolf from the door, the old gentleman is broke. However if you wish to return to your folks in New Haven, he will furnish the transportation.

AGNES

And you---

MURRAY

As for me, he intimated that I could either walk or fly, or fall upon my knees, or something of the kind.

AGNES

What sort of nonsensical talk is this?

MURRAY

There is no nonsense about it, it's plain cold facts. He gave me the cold shoulder in a very decided manner. I cannot understand it in a clergyman who teaches others to forgive their enemies. I guess he doesn't practice what he preaches.

AGNES

You must have approached him in the wrong way.

MURRAY

I'd like to know which is the right way. The old gent must have gotten out of bed on the wrong side this morning and stepped on a tack.

AGNES

I can see it all. He is thoroughly disgusted with your heartless conduct. You who have deceived others all of your life now end by deceiving yourself. You had better seek new fields of endeavor; you have exhausted the old ones.

MURRAY

But what shall become of you?

AGNES

I will look out for myself.

MURRAY

You always did.

AGNES

I don't suppose it matters much to you what I do, where I

~~RECKRECK~~ go or what becomes of me. You have no heart---no soul.

MURRAY

Well, I manage to get along without either, now there's St. Elmo---
(ST. ELMO ENTERS) He was a man of soul---

ST. ELMO

Yes, he was a man of soul, but he has been transformed. That soul has become a living, incarnate fiend, love has---withered and died. The only hope is the hope of vengeance.

AGNES

St. Elmo!

MURRAY

St. Elmo!

ST. ELMO

Nay heare me out. It was even such a night as this I last looked upon you both whom I once idolized. I stood behind the grape vine in the garden and heard myself ridiculed, sneered at and slandered. You called me a cat's paw, a silly doting fool, easily hoodwinked. I heard that you loathed my carresses, shuddered at my arms, and flew for happiness to his. I learned that from the beginning I had been duped, that you had always loved each other, and always would, but poverty marred your marriage. I staggered away to seek a weapon with which I could end the lives of both. While searching in my cabinet I then found the evidence that you my Damon, my Jonathan, were simply a vulgar thief, that lowest type of thief, which picks the pocket of the friend who feeds him. My discovery changed my purpose of revenge too grand to be wasted on one so contemptible. I determined then you should wear a convict's stripes ---you learned of my purpose and fled.

MURRAY

And now what do you intend to do?

ST. ELMO

As regards you, my purpose remains unchanged.

~~MURRAY~~ AGNES

And what do you intend to do with me? I never robbed you. The mining stock you gave me is worthless. I will return you the certificate.

ST. ELMOS

Madam, I can wish you no greater punishment than that the world holds in store for you. After sounding the lowest depths of degradation, you'll seek the suicides refuge, a dishonored grave in the gutter where you belong. (X'S TO L. CORNER)

AGNES

(C.) Murray Hammond, are you dead to all sense of honor, all manhood?

MURRAY

Agnes, I--

AGNES

Don't speak to me. (X'S UP C.) and don't attempt to follow me. I leave you alone with this man and I warn you never come near me again until you bring proofs that you wiped out this insult to your wife in his heart's blood. (EXIT R. C. OVER RUN)

MURRAY

St. Elmo, I demand satisfaction.

ST. ELMO

Do you mean a duel?

MURRAY

Yes.

ST. ELMO

Duels are for gentlemen. You are a black leg. All that I can do for you is to drive you to the village jail as I would a snappingneur to his kennel. (BUS. WHIPS MURRAY WHO RETREATS TO L. U. CORNER)

MURRAY

My God, you shall make amends for this, but I won't fight you with my hands. You've struck me, and in self defense I'll kill you. (DRAWS PISTOL)

VAN

(ENTER OVER RUN) (POINTING RIFLE AT MURRAY) Now you won't! This looks like a one-sided argument. If there's going to be any shooting going on, give the other fellow a chance. I'm here to see fair play.. I'm the man behind the gun. (TO ST. ELMO) Say, stranger, have you got a gun?

ST. ELMO

No.

VAN

Then take mine! (HANDS ST. ELMO REVOLVER) There's a clearing over yonder (POINTS R. 2 E.) You can fight it out there. I'll go along to see fair play. (TAPPING BUTTLE OF HIS RIFLE. BUS. THEY EXIT R. 2 MURRAY FIRST THEN VAN ST. ELMO LAST. PAUSE)

EDNA

(ENTERS FROM CABIN L.) Oh, Van, why he is gone. It is growing dark and I feel nervous, as if something dreadful was going to happen. I wish daddy would come. (SHOTS FIRED OFF R.) (LOOKS OFF R.) What do those shots mean? I can see Van and somebody is with him. (GOES R. 2 E.)

MURRAY

(ENTERS R. U. WITH REVOLVER IN HAND) I'm sure I've caught him twice, but he keeps on like a bloodhound. If this place was only open. (TRIES DOOR OF SHED) I could barricade myself and kill him as he came in. Ah --- (DASHES OVER R. AS ST. ELMO ENTERS R. U. E. ON RUN MURRAY FIRES ON ST. ELMO WHO STAGGERS FALLS ON KNEES? MURRAY ADVANCES THINKING HE HAS FINISHED WHITH HIM WHEN ST. ELMO SUDDENLY THRUSTS HIS ARMS ASIDE AND FIRES KILLING HIM. MURRAY STAGGERS AND FALLS DEAD DOWN L. ENTERS VAN DOWN R.)

EDNA

(COMES R. C.) Help! Help!

ST. ELMO

(WHO IS STANDING OVER MURRAY) What do you want here? Who are you?

EDNA

A witness to your crime. You are a murderer.

ST. ELMO

I am the judge of my own act and a

duel is no crime.

EDNA
God is our supreme judge. And may He have mercy on you for this night's work. (KNEELS IN PRAYER. LIGHT ON HER. VAN ADVANCES TAKES ST. EDMUND'S ARM. THEY START TO EXIT R. U. E.)

CURTAIN.

(AT RISE AGNES AND GORDON LEIGH ENTER WINDOW C. GORDON IS HANDSOME YOUNG MAN SMOOTHFACE.)

AGNES
(LAUGHING) Really, Gordon, you are impossible.

GORDON
(DOWN L.) Then you don't take any stock in me?

AGNES
As a lover? Not the least bit.

GORDON
I'll remember that.

AGNES
Please do. Then we will understand each other.

GORDON
St. Elmo has returned home.

AGNES
Yes, he's been back two days.

GORDON
How long has he been away from this beautiful estate of his?

AGNES
From the la Bocage! Three years this time, and he's worse than ever. Let him alone and he'll be all all right, but oppose him, and you might as well fight "Old Nick" himself with a red hot pitchfork.

GORDON
What did he say to your presence here?

AGNES
He smiled his old cynical smile and treated me with the most utmost courtesy.

GORDON
And you?

AGNES
When I looked at him I felt a love for him I never felt before.

GORDON
And yet you jilted him.

AGNES
Yes, wonderful isn't it? I thought I despised him and now he refuses me. Are you aware that St. Elmo don't like you?

GORDON
I don't give a rap. I'm not particularly stuck on him. (AGNES LAUGHS SEATED L.) By the way---who is this Miss Anna Earl, that is living here?

AGNES
The grand-daughter of an old blacksmith. He died three years ago leaving the girl alone. Mr. Hammond the minister brought her to

Mrs. Murray who adopted her in away. Anyhow she's a pensioner here and lives off the bounty of St. Elmo's mother.

GORDON

You evidently dislike her.

AGNES

I know that Mrs. Murray has spent a lot of money on her education. She is what the world calls very accomplished. Why that orphan has studied Hebrew Greek, even the dead languages instead of being trained to wash tub or some useful work in a factory.

GORDON

(LAUGHS) I must start in on Hebrew and Greek at once.

AGNES

For what?

GORDON

That I may hold my own with St. Elmo.

AGNES

Why St. Elmo wouldn't look at that creature. And I know Anna fears and hates him.

GORDON

I am not so sure of that. What would you think if the future should bring about a union between the rich master of La Bocage and this intellectual wonder of an orphan.

AGNES

Why if Mrs. Murray had any idea of such a misfortune she would order the girl out of the house at once.

GORDON

What would suit my purpose.

AGNES

Are you interested in her?

GORDON

I am to a certain extent.

GORDON AGNES

I understand you thoroughly.

GORDON

And I you.

AGNES VAN

(ENTERS ARCH L. U. E. HE IS IN FULL DRESS BUT IN BAD TASTE. SATIN TIE AND PROFUSION OF JEWELRY. ACTOR MUST BE CAREFUL NOT TO BURLESQUE)
Howdy everybody. I hope I don't intrude. I never like to mix where I I'm not wanted.

GORDON

(TO AGNES) That fellow is a bore.

AGNES

He is a strange character, but humor him.

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VAN
(AGNES GOES TO WINDOW. VAN'S EYES FOLLOW HER AROUND CIRCLE) (TO GORDON) Some gal, twhat?

GORDON
You mean she's---

VAN
A peach-er-re--no!

GORDON
What kind of language is that?

VAN
Life is too short to explain.

GORDON
Who in the devil are you?

VAN
What? Haven't you heard about me? The celebrated and I may say n
notorious Vanderdecken Jiggins, commonly called "Van" whose name
and fame has been spread from East to West, from North to South,
Van Jiggins, who perfected the hydraulic ram as applied to mining-
whose patent rights already yeld thousands Van Jiggins, who
will one day be Governor of Colorado. Van Jiggins the brainy---Van
Jiggins, the handsome. Oh--a little and I think when I roamed as a
barefoot boy over Lookout acting as a guide and manufacturin' war
relics and acquairin' freckles stone bruises and thorns in my tootsy
wootsies, that I would have the chance to gloat over the proud,
but mediocreminded, that I have had lately.

GORDON
Look out. Oh yes you are the fellow who used to swindle the Yankee
visitors.

VAN
Yep!

GORDON
At that time, they called you the clever idiot.

VAN
Yep, that's what they called me then/ But since, with my perfected
mining machinery, I have added thousands to St. Elmo Murray's fortune.
I can gloat---I can gloat. (VAN GOES DOWN R. TAKES OUT HANKERCHIEF
AND RUBS DIAMOND RING OR STUD VERY PROUD)

GORDON
(GOES TO AGNES) That fellow is the limit. Don't forget I want to
talk to you later about Miss Edna Earle.

AGNES
At your pleasure. (GORDON EXITS WINDOW C.) (AGNES COMES DOWN L.) So
you are Mr. Van Jiggins.

VAN
(STILL RUBBING DIAMOND) That's me!

AGNES
Have you forgotten me? Don't you remember the time we met?

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It was just before I lost my unfortunate husband. (SIGHS) Ah, a most sad affair.

VAN

Was he, madam, was he? I am sorry to hear it.

AGNES

Yes, I became a widow.

VAN

I congratulate you. I mean I'm sorry. How did it happen?

AGNES

(SURPRISED) How did it happen? Why you know if anyone knows.

VAN

I know?

AGNES

You were there when Mr. Murray and he quarreled that night three years ago on Lookout.

VAN

And you are--

AGNES

I was Murray Hammond's wife.

VAN

(REALIZING AND GAZING AT HER) Well, I'll be--

AGNES

What's the matter?

VAN

Why, I was just sort of--kind of thinking. (PAUSE)

AGNES

You are naturally surprised to find me in this house and St. Elmo Murray and myself on such good terms? We understand each other perfectly and never allude to the past. The identity of the antagonist of my husband in the duel is a secret shared only by St. Elmo, you and myself.

VAN

Doesn't the boy's father know?

AGNES

He does not.

VAN

There was one more witness.

AGNES

Who?

VAN

Well, if you don't know, it doesn't matter. (VAN GOES UP C.)

AGNES

EDNA
(ENTERS ARCH R. U. E. SHE IS DRESSED A PERFECT INGENUE. REFINED AND CULTURED---YET FULL OF LIGHT COMEDY) I wonder where I left it? (LOOKING AROUND, SEES AGNES) Oh, I beg your pardon. I'm looking for a book, I must have left it here this morning.

AGNES
(RATHER COLDLY) You will find it on the table there,

EDNA
I thank you. (X'S L. PICKS UP BOOK, LOOKING THROUGH IT)

AGNES
Mr. Van Jiggins, will you excuse me? (GOES UP L.)

VAN
With pleasure!

AGNES
(TURNS) Eh?

VAN
Run along; I'll look you up when I haven't anything else to do.

AGNES
(IN A TEMPER) The ignorant clod-hopper! (EXITS L. U. E.)

VAN
(SMOOTHES HIS HAIR) I say, Edna.

EDNA
Yes, Van. (X'S R. PLACES BOOK ON TABLE OPENS LEAVES DOWN SO SHE CAN QUICKLY FIND QUOTATION LATER)

VAN
I've been thinking of you.

EDNA
(SMILES) I'm glad of that. I want all my old friends to remember me.

VAN
Yes, but I was thinking. I was thinking. (SCRATCHES HEAD) I was thinking---

EDNA
(BRIGHT) Van, don't you think?

VAN
Why?

EDNA
I mean don't say what you are going to say.

VAN
Yes, but I want---

EDNA
I know what you want. You and I are to be good friends.

VAN
Not me.

EDNA

Oh, I'm so sorry.

VAN

I know all about that sister gag. I'm up to snuff. I've cut my eye teeth. I've travelled. I've been in four different states. I've seen gals by the grove and none of them looked good to me except you. I had a hankerin' for you since you was knee high to a skeeter, and--and---say, Edna, I would like to hitch to you.

EDNA

Hitch to me?

VAN

Yes, travel in double harness.

EDNA

Oh yes, I understand.

VAN

What do you say?

EDNA

(CONFUSED) Really, Van, I--

VAN

Don't answer right away. I'll give you two minutes to think it over.

EDNA

You big boy, I won't take two minutes.

VAN

Then it's all settled.

EDNA

Yes.

VAN

Then you are mine?

EDNA

No.

VAN

Yes. No. Darn it! Which one is it?

EDNA

No!

VAN

(WILTS) Oh!

EDNA

(TAKES HIS HAND) Van, I'm awfully sorry if I have hurt your feelings.

VAN

Don't mention it; I'm used to being turned down by the gals. If one would smile on me, and really mean it, I fear I would die with a rush of joy to the brain. Say what does the other fellow look like?

Which other fellow?

EDNA

The man you like.

VAN

EDNA
You dear old soul, there is no man in this case. I am not thinking of such things, besides I'll never marry. My heart is dead.

VAN
Your heart is dead? You ought to take something for it..(GOES UP TO WINDOW)

EDNA
Going, Van?

VAN
Yep. I'm a little warm under the collar, and I'm going to cool off.

EDNA
(LOOKS UP SMILING AT HIM) You're not angry, Van?

VAN
Not on your life. You are still my little mountain sweetheart and always will be so. (VAN EXITS WINDOW)

EDNA
Poor Van, he has strange ideas of love, women, and marriages. (THE ABOVE SCENE WITH EDNA? VAN DOES NOT SWAGGER, BUT PLAYS WITH BOYISH HUMOR OF ACT 1ST. EDNA IS BRIGHT WITH A TOUCH OF LIGHT COMEDY. THE MOMENT SHE HEARS ST. ELMO'S VOICE SHE BECOMES COLD AS MARBLE)

ST. ELMO
(OUTSIDE ARCH L. U. E.) Down you beast, or I'll teach you a lesson. (SOUND OF WHIP HEARD AS IF LASHING A DOG)

EDNA
(RUSHES TO ENTRANCE L. U.) Oh horrible cruelty.

ST. ELMO
Take that, you savage hound! (SOUND OF WHIP)

EDNA
(SPEAKS OFF) Stop I say---stop!

ST. ELMO
(ENTERS L. U. E.) How dare you interfere with me? If I wish to chastise my dog?

EDNA
I think it is cruel to mistreat a poor dumb beast as you just done.

ST. ELMO
Oh you do?

EDNA
(X'S TO TABLE TAKES UP BOOK, READS IN A CLEAR TONE) Listen to this. "A man of kindness to his beast is kind-Brutal actions shows a brutal mind."

ST. ELMO

Who wrote that trash?

EDNA

Cooper, sir.

ST. ELMO

Let me see your book. (EDNA HANDS HIM BOOK) Cooper was a sentimental fool. (THROWS BOOK UP STAGE) I am the best judge of my own actions and neither ask your help nor interference with that which does not concern you.

EDNA

God is the judge of mine sir. I don't want to interfere in your household affairs, and I am only sorry I came in here this evening I did not dream of meeting you. I thought you had gone to town.

ST. ELMO

You evidently think I am the very devil himself working the earth like a roaring lion. Mind your own affairs hereafter and when I give you a positive order, obey it, for I am master here and my word is law. Meddling or disobedience I neither tolerate nor forgive. Do you understand me?

EDNA

I will not meddle, sir.

ST. ELMO

That means you will not obey me unless you think proper? (PAUSE) Oh, I see. Would you prefer to have me as a friend or an avowed enemy.

EDNA

I should certainly prefer to consider you neither.

ST. ELMO

Did you ever hear of me failing in any matter I had determined to accomplish?

EDNA

Yes, your whole life is a hug hideous woeful failure which mocks and maddens you.

ST. ELMO

What in the devil do you know of my life? It is not ended yet and it remains to be seen whether a great success is not destined to crown it. Single handed I am fighting the world, the flesh and the devil. I want neither sympathy nor assistance.

EDNA

I have never thrust any of those upon you, and never shall. Excuse me, Mr. Murray your mother needs me. (EDNA GOES TO ARCH L. C. BOWS TO HIM AND EXITS)

VAN

(ENTER WINDOW C.) I say, Edna, I forgot to ask you---

ST. ELMO

Miss Earle has just left.

VAN

Never mind. What I have to say will keep.

ST. ELMO

You call her, Edna?

VAN

Yep. That's what I called her when she was a little barefooted girl running over Lookout.

ST. ELMO

And now she has grown to be an accomplished woman. Though, I regard her as an unmitigated little prig, she is a student.

VAN

Then you are two of a kind.

ST. ELMO

Eh?

VAN

Students! I mean to say she must look up to you, eh?

ST. ELMO

Look up to me? Why, man, one moment she defies me, then next she thoroughly abhors me. If I touch her the flesh absolutely withers away from my hands, as if I were plague stricken or a leper. Her very eye-lids shudder when she looks at me. I believe she would more willingly confront Lucifer himself.

VAN

She must think you're the very devil. Well, Edna always a pious soul.

ST. ELMO

Pious? Yes? What do you think she has done during my absence?

VAN

I give it up.

ST. ELMO

Induced my mother to have family prayers every night. Prayers! Prayers Worse and more of it! Oh carnival of shame! And I attended it last night. I, who am so suspicious of pious people. I'll swear my watch is not safe in my pocket and I shall sleep with the key of my cameo cabinet hung around my neck.

VAN

Edna is honest.

ST. ELMO

Better than that in my eyes. She is fearless. She has the courage to defy me. I will never forget the steady, brave look of scorn she had in her eyes when she accused me of being cruel for whipping my dog. (HALF TO HIMSELF) Cruel; If there is a hell blacker than my miserable soul, man has not dreamed nor language painted it. (AROUSES HIMSELF*) But let us forget all of this. Jiggins, you shall visit my holy of holies, my den, my Egyptian Museum and my cameo cabinet (ST. ELMO X'S AND THROWS OPEN D. R. 2 E.) Here you are, Jiggins.

VAN

(X'S TO DOOR) Gosh, what a funny looking place. (EXITS R. 2 E.)

ST. ELMO

Amuse yourself--I may join you later. (EXITS WINDOW C.)

(ENTER GORDON AND EDNA L. 3 E. THEY ARE LAUGHING AND CHATTING) 20

GORDON

You like Mrs. Gordon very much ~~ahattkghak~~ do you not

EDNA

(BRIGHTLY) She is the dearest soul on earth, and you amuse her much with your stories. They are really very clever.

GORDON

Do you think so? (EDNA NODS HER HEAD YES) I have a good one on St. Elmo

EDNA

(CHANGE IN MANNER. COLD) Excuse me, I prefer not to hear it. (X'S FRONT OF TABLE)

GORDON

(SMILES) Oh, very well, Edna. (EDNA LOOKS AT HIM QUICKLY) Pardon me, Miss Earle. Won't you give me a flower from your bouquet? (EDNA TAKES FLOWER FROM HER CORSAGE, HANDS IT TO HIM. HE PUTS IT IN HIS BUTTON HOLE*) Now let me show you this ring. (TAKES OUT RING) It comes from Arabia. The motto you see engraved in it is Arabian and means, "Peace be with, the National Salvation of the Arabs" I want you to accept this ring and wear it in memory of our friendship---and the beginning of our student life together.

EDNA

(WHO HAS BEEN EXAMINING RING) No, no. I thank you, Mr. Leigh, but I cannot take it.

GORDON

Why not?

EDNA

Because of it's beauty and value. I will not deprive you of it. And I don't think it right to accept presents from anyone unless it be a relative or dear friends.

GORDON

Well, aren't we dear friends? Why can't we be such? I am sure Mrs. Murray would approve. (ENTER AGNES L. U. E.)

AGNES

(TO EDNA) Here's a letter for you, dear. (HANDS EDNA A LETTER) It just arrived. and it looks so important I have brought it to you.

EDNA

Thank you ever so much.

AGNES

While you are reading your letter will you excuse Mr. Leigh. He has been monopolizing you ever --ever so long.

GORDON

I find Miss Earle, very interesting.

AGNES

And I am not! Oh: I'm not jealous. (X'S TO EDNA) You will excuse him, won't you, dear? (DON'T GIVE EDNA TIME TO SPEAK) Then thanks. I won't keep him long. I'll send him right back. (TAKES GORDON'S ARMS) Come along, Gordon. (THEY EXIT WINDOW LAUGHING AND CHATTING)

EDNA
(X'S TO SOFA OPENS LETTER, LOOKS AT IT, CRUSHES IT IN HER HAND SINKS ON SOFA) Rejected--my most cherished hope is blasted. (BOWS HEAD ON ARM ON SOFA)

VAN
Jerusalem, that place gives me the creeps up and down my back bone. I've seen all I want of "Mummies" and "sich dead ones" I want to take a look at some live ones. (SEES EDNA) Why, Edan, you aint sick?

EDNA
No, I have been writing for the publishers and they have returned my manuscripts. (SHOWS LETTER IN HER HAND) A knell for all my sanguine hopes. Here is the death warrant for my poor little work. (RISES DOGGEDLY) I must try again.

VAN
That's my motto and a good one "Try again"

EDNA
I have been writing and sending my efforts to the publishers in the hopes that I might earn enough to raise a simple stone over grandfather's grave. The little wooden slab with the rudely painted inscription, "Sacred to the memory of Aaron Hunt" an honest blacksmith and a true Christian" looked so forlorn and poor amid the blooming flowers that decked the surrounding resting places, that my heart reproached me, when I thought of it, and now my hopes for the stone slab are blasted.

VAN
(LITTLE EXCITED) Not by a darn sight.

EDNA
Why, Van, what do you mean?

VAN
Why---(STOPS SUDDENLY) I reckon I had better keep my mouth shut.

EDNA
Van, you are acting so strangely.

VAN
I'm only taking St. Elmo's advice, never tell tales out of school.

EDNA
(SHRUGS HER SHOULDERS, X'S TO FRONT OF TABLE R.) You and Mr. Murray are very warm friends.

VAN
(SWELLS UP) We are pals. He took a big liking to me after I loaned him my gun that night on Lookout. In the duel he was wounded twice himself and I toted him to the surgeon.

EDNA
(SHE NEARLY FAINTS. CLINGS TO EDGE OF TABLE) Then ---it was---he who fought that duel.

VAN
Yes, didn't you know it?

EDNA

(EXCITED) That voice---that voice, I remember. It all comes back to me now. It was night, I could not see his face yet the scene of the murder, haunts me sleeping or waking--he is the son of my benefactress. He is an assassin and I have been blind---bling!

VAN

Edna!

EDNA

Go away! Go away! leave me--leave me with my conscience and my God. (X'S L.) I cannot speak with you now. (SINKS ON SOFA)

VAN

I'll leave you, Edna, but I'm going to hang around and watch over you. (EXITS L. U. E.)

ST. ELMO

(ENTERS WINDOW C.) (GOES TO HER) Let me extend the olive branch, Edna. Come let us shake hands.

EDNA

(RISING) No! No! NO! (X'S TO R.)

ST. ELMO

What! You refuse to take my hand? Why?

EDNA

Because it is stained with the blood of your fellow man?

ST. ELMO

(LAUGHS) My dear little lady, your studies have turned your brain. "Too much learning hath made thee mad."

EDNA

Turn back your memory to three years ago--a moonlight night on Lookout--think of your crime which I witnessed. Which burns in my memory and will haunt my brain as long as I live. I saw you shoot Mr. Hammond's son.

ST. ELMO

He deserved his fate. I gave him every chance and he wounded me, twice before I killed him. It was a duel or what I would call a wolf hunt, but a duel as we understand in this section.

EDNA

I am told you are the best pistol shot in Tennessee.

ST. ELMO

You flatter me!

EDNA

Well, when a man skilled in weapons as you are, points his pistol at another's heart, it is no longer a duel, it is murder. Oh I know that custom sanctions or rather tolerates, that relic of the barbarous ages, that blot upon Christian civilization which is termed dueling, but I call it murder.

ST. ELMO

(SEIZES HER HANDS? DRAWS HER CLOSELY TO HIM, FACING HIM) I see that Heaven and Hell are leagued to poison your mind. You have been

trained well, by that meddling old hypocrite Hammond. The seeds of
of his hate have fallen in good grounds, and I see a beautiful harvest
for my cycle., but I'll be--(UNABLE TO FINISH HE THROWS HER FROM HIM
IN HIS PASSION)

EDNA

When you speak of Mr. Hammond, in that way you are doubly wicked.
He does not know who killed his son. He never shall know it through me.

ST. ELMO

It matters little. (TURNS TO HER WITH TENDER PASSION) You spurn my
friendship? (VAN ENTERS SLOWLY L. U. E.)

EDNA

(PAUSE, HESITATES SLOWLY) There is a gulf between us which we can never
cross.

~~ST. ELMO~~ VAN

(BE CAREFUL AND AVOID COMEDY) Edna, I want to say something, kin I?

EDNA

Yes.

VAN

You said you wanted to put a stone slab over your grandfather's grave.
You won't have to do that, because there is a ~~beautiful~~ beautiful
marble shaft. You will see "erected in honor of Aaron Hunt by his
devoted granddaughter."

EDNA

Why, whose act was this?

VAN

(POINTING TO ST. ELMO) His!

ST. ELMO

~~REDEVELOP~~ ROUGHLY) No more! No more! (SINKS ON SOFA)

VAN

I could have told you before Edna, but I thought it best to keep my
mouth shut. (GOES UP C.)

EDNA

He---he erected a marble shaft in memory of my dear old grandpa and I
refused to take his hand--(GOES TO ST. ELMO) Mr. Murray. (SHE OFFERS
HER HAND) (HE RISES, TAKES IT, LIFTS IT TO HIS LIPS, KISSES IT) (VAN
SMILES WITH SATISFACTION EXITS)

ST. ELMO

Edna:'

EDNA

Forgive me.

ST. ELMO

Freely!

EDNA

Good night, sir. (STARTS R.)

ST. ELMO

One moment! I'm going away tomorrow perhaps never to return. In which case, I want you to take charge of this key. It belongs to my gameo cabinet. In a year if I do not return and you have reason to consider me dead, take this key which I wish you to wear about your person to my mother and inform her of this conversation and then open the cabinet. Can you resist the temptation to look into it? Think well before you answer.

EDNA

I should not like to take charge of it. You can certainly trust your own mother rather than an utter stranger like myself.

ST. ELMO

I tell you I do not choose to leave it in any hands but yours. Will you promise or will you not?

EDNA

Give me the key. I will not betray your trust.

ST. ELMO

Do you promise me solemnly that you will never open the cabinet except in accordance with my directions? Weight the promise well before you give it.

EDNA

Yes sir, I promise most solemnly.

ST. ELMO

(GIVES HER A SMALL KEY WHICH HE HAS TAKEN FROM HIS POCKET) Here it is.

EDNA

(TAKES KEY, LOOKS AT IT CURIOUSLY)

ST. ELMO

You will permit me to escort you to my mother. I have something to say in your presence, before I leave. (AGNES ENTERS WINDOW C. SLOWLY)

EDNA

Very well. (ST. ELMO LEADS HER TO DOOR R. 3 PASSES HER OFF BOWING AND FOLLOWS HER)

AGNES

(LOOKS AT THEM WITH A SNEER) St. Elmo leaves in the morning. That girl must be compromised in his eyes before his departure. How can I work it? (STANDS IN DEEP MEDITATIVE)

VAN

(SPEAKS OUTSIDE) That's all right, little fairy. You don't hurt my feelings. I've been there before. (HE ENTERS THROUGH WINDOW. SEES AGNES) Oh, there you are. I've been handed another.

AGNES

Another what?

VAN

Frozen face, my little Miss Ruffles.

AGNES

I don't know her.

VAN
The pork packer's daughter.

AGNES
Oh you mean Miss Moneybags.

VAN
She's the one. Just met her in the park looking at the deer. She won me at once. I proposed on the spot. She laughed and said, "Excuse me" I excused her. (AGNES LAUGHS) Oh, I'll get over my aching heart. Don't think I'll have to go back to Colorado alone. What do you think, Miss Agnes?

AGNES
Don't call me, Miss. Have you forgotten that I am a widow?

VAN
But you don't look it. You once had a husband, that is after you were married.

AGNES
Yes, poor fellow, he was shot down like a dog.

VAN
Not exactly like a dog. I never heard a dog fighting a duel. I cannot see anything cold-blooded about it. As some people call it. In a duel it is all a matter of chance and skill of course. Now your late lamented and dear departed husband would have put a skylight through St. Elmo. and sent him by the rear into eternity, but St. Elmo beat him to it. And your husband was accommodating enough to make you a widow. It was a fair fight between man and man, so there you are.. You are a widow---in the market---don't lose hope for your chance will come again! Speaking of chances, I give Edna the first chance to marry me, she refused--the Pork Packer's Daughter gave me the laugh. Say what chance do you think I stand with your sister Gertrude?

AGNES
Not the slightest in the world.

VAN
Oh, button hooks! (TURNING TO GO AND BUMPS INTO GORDON WHO HAS ENTERED L. U. E.)

GORDON
Pardon me!

VAN
(LOOKS HIM UP AND DOWN) Oh piffle! (VAN EXITS QUICKLY WINDOW C.)

GORDON
(TO AGNES) What's the matter with your friend?

JAMES
He has a weakness for falling in love with every pretty face he meets. and proposes to them all. He is in love with Gertrude. I gave him to understand his case is hopeless.

GORDON
The fellow is mad.

AGNES

But very clever, and not such a fool as you think.

GORDON

He's out of my class.

AGNES

How are you succeeding with our little Miss Edna?

GORDON

She's cold and indifferent. I haven't dropped the game. I am not easily discouraged.

AGNES

You will be before you get through with her.

GORDON

I must confess she has completely captivated me. There is something about the girl that attracts me in spite of myself.

AGNES

You are talking arrogant, nonsense. You have but one motive and that is to compromise her. I'm going to give you that opportunity. St. Elmo leaves in the morning. He will pass the evening with his mother. Before she retires for the night, Miss Early always visits this room alone, for an hour or so, of quiet readings. I will see that Van Jiggins is out of the way, giving you a chance to meet this cultured brat alone. I will leave the rest in your hands.

GORDON

I will make good use of it.

AGNES

When St. Elmo leaves I wish him to leave with a cloud hanging over her.

GORDON

You can rely on me.

AGNES

How will you compromise her?

GORDON

I'll think of some ingenious scheme.

AGNES

There must be no failure. St. Elmo ~~leaves-her~~ loves her and I know it

GORDON

And you want St. Elmo.

AGNES

It is for this reason I want to ruin the upstart in the eyes of St. Elmo and his mother.

GORDON

You are a devil!

AGNES

Men have made me so/ I will go and look up our country clown. Don't fail and you will win your latest love. (LAUGHS AND EXITS L. 3 E.)

GORDON

(GOES TO WINDOW) By jove, this is a risky play, but nothing ventured --nothing won! (STEPS OUT OF WINDOW) (ENTER EDNA R. 3 E.)(GOES TO TABLE LIGHTS CANDLE LIGHTS UP HAVE MATCHES ON TRAY. SHE X'S TO SOFA BOOK IN HAND, SITS TO READ. ENTER GORDON WINDOW GOES TO HER QUICKLY) Ah, Edna, this is a treat to find you here alone.

EDNA

Why are you here? (RISES)

GORDON

(BLOWS OUT CANDLE STAGE DARK)

EDNA

Why did you blow out the light?

GORDON

So I can say what is in my heart without fear of interruption. Edna, I want to plead my cause with you. My divorce is pending, and in a month I will be a free man. I want you to accept my heart and hand.

EDNA

No! No! No! (X'S HIM. HE SIZES HER HANDS)

GORDON

Edna, you know I love you. I have loved you since the first day we met. My happiness is in your dear little hands. My future is joyless unless you share it. The one darling hope of my life is to call you my wife. Don't draw your hand from mine, let me keep it always.

EDNA

Impossible!

GORDON

Why impossible?

EDNA

Because I never would love you as I think I ought to love the man I marry.

GORDON

Do you love anyone else better than you love me? (PAUSE) Does St. Elmo Murray stand between your heart and mine?

EDNA

No.

GORDON

Then I'll not yield the hope of winning your love. If your heart is free, I will have it all my own, some day. Oh, Edna, why can't you have me? I would make you very happy. My darling's home would possess all that fortune and devoted affections could supply

EDNA

I am able to earn a home. I do not intend to marry for one.

GORDON

Ah your pride is your only fault and it is going to cause us both much suffering. Edna, I know how sensitive you are and how you have been wounded by this malicious gossip. I'd like to punish these scandal mongers as they deserve, but, Edna, it isn't

fair for you to visit their offenses on me.

EDNA

Mr. Leigh, no woman should marry a man whose affection and society are not absolutely essential to her peace of mind. I can never love you as you wish. I appreciate that you stretched out your hand to a poor girl of humble parentage, reared by charity, one considered by your family and friends, as an intruder in your circle, and nobly you say, "Come take my name, share my fortune, wrap yourself in my love, and be happy." Oh, Mr. Leigh, ambition and gratitude alike plead for you, but it is impossible.

GORDON

Is that your final answer?

EDNA

It is---so good night.

GORDON

Oh, I'm going to remain for awhile. You little puritan, I have tried to win you by fair means, but you won't have it. Now I'll go another way to work with you.

EDNA

What would you do?

GORDON

Compromise you.

EDNA

That is a cowardly act.

GORDON

All's fair in love and war. You will be found here with me in my arms by Agnes. You will be disgraced beyond all remedy. I wanted you for my wife and now you will have no resource but to be my mistress.

EDNA

You dog! (STRIKES HIM HYSTERICALLY) You devil, you devil! (HE SEIZES HER) Release me. (SHE CALLS) Help! Help! (SHORT STRUGGLE. SHE BACKS AWAY FROM HIM, RUSHES TO WINDOW. ST. ELMO ENTERS. SHE RUNS INTO HIS ARMS. PICTURE.) St. Elmo, save me, save me from that man. (WINDOW CURTAINS OPEN. MOON ON SCENE)

ST. ELMO

Have no fear, I am by your side. Go into the next room while I give this wretch the punishment he deserves.

GORDON

Deserve. (LAUGHS MOCKINGLY) That's pretty good! Why that sublime little hypocrite is here with me in the dark by her own consent. The innocent and injured game she is playing is as old as the hills.

EDNA

You fiend! Oh that I had the strength of a man that I might make you swallow that lie.

ST. ELMO

You may command my strength, Edna. Shall I punish him?

EDNA

Yes, punish him, punish him!

GORDON

Ah, you have forgotten your Christian Training, eh?

EDNA

This is a time when I only remember my insulted womanhood and your vile lying slander.

ST. ELMO

(SEIZES GORDON BY THROAT) Down on your knees and ask her pardon.

AGNES

(ENTER L. U. E.) What does this mean?

EDNA

It means that God always guards the right and your plot has failed.
(ST. ELMO THROWS GORDON TO THE STAGE L. AND TAKES EDNA IN HIS ARMS)

C U R T A I N

VAN

(AT RISE IS DISCOVERED AT WINDOW LOOKING OUT) Ah there. (WAVES HANK ARCHIE) Good afternoon. A pleasant afternoon for such an afternoon. (GIRLS LAUGH OFF R.) Don't run away girls. See you later. Daisy bunch of girls that. (ENTER GORDON L. U. E. SEES HIM) Hellow. When did you show up? I thought you had left the country for your country's good.

GORDON

Were you speaking to me, sir?

VAN

Well, I didn't happen to see anyone else around, but then if you feel bad about it, I'm sorry for you. Still I would like you to answer me one question. It will relieve my mind.

GORDON

What is it?

VAN

Do you think you are anybody in particular?

GORDON

You meddling fool, I'd thrash you like a dog.'

VAN

That's all right, but some dogs can bite and while we're speaking of dogs there is one particular breed of animal that the dog-catchers ought to gather in.

GORDON

Indeed! And what is that?

VAN

It is known as the human cur who seeks to wreck and ruin the life of an innocent girl.

GORDON

Do you refere to me, Mr. Jiggins, the inventor?

VAN

I am looking at you, Mr. Leigh, the sneak!

GORDON

How dare you insult me! Can you fight?

VAN

Fight? Like a bantam rooster. That's my long suit. I was born near Lookout Mountains, the fighting center of America, and I've been on the lookout ever since. Sayk you are not wanted in this locality. You had better pull up stakes and seek pastures new.

GORDON

On whose authority do you speak?

VAN

My own. If you stay, I'll make things hot for you.

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GORDON

You have insulted me. Your miserable life shall pay the forfeit.
Here's my card. Name your time and place. (HANDS CARD TO VAN) I'm
a dead shot.

VAN

In that case, I'm a dead man. Well, I have no card of my own but
here's one that was handed me at the young men's Christian Association
(HANDS GORDON CARD)

GORDON

(READS CARD) "Prepare to meet thy God." (TEARS CARD) Bah!

VAN

A southern gentleman only meets gentlemen on the "Field of Honor"
I have evidence you are a black leg. You were caught last night
cheating in a game of poker.

GORDON

That's a lie!

VAN

Oh no it ain't. There is plenty of evidence in sight. Take a fool's
advice. St. Elmo will arrive home today. There is a committee of
citizens anxious to meet you, and if you are seen here or twenty
miles of this place in the next ten hours, you will be escorted on
your way by a posse of gentlemen. I promise you they won't handle you
gently

GORDON

(PAUSE) You have won, I will go.

VAN

Run along. Try to be good.

GORDON

(SNEER) Thanks! (WITH A LOOK OF CONTEMPT EXITS L. U. E.)

VAN

That man has so little manhood in him that he ought to be arrested for
impersonating a human being. (GOES UP TO WINDOW) Ah there she is
among the roses. Agnes! She looks good to me. I will propose to
her at once. Edna passed me up, the Pork Packer's daughter gave me
the merry ha ha! I will fall back to Agnes. (ENTER AGNES WINDOW C.)
Agnes, I love you, marry me right away now. (SUDDENLY TO HER)

AGNES

Mr. Jiggin!

VAN

Call me "Vanderdecken"

AGNES

Why you liberally take my breath away.

VAN

Take a fresh breath and say, "Yes"

AGNES

But this is so sudden.

VAN
That's what they all say. That is, all that I proposed to.

AGNES
All?

VAN
Tut! I'm a rusher. I go at everything slam bang, lickety split. Anybody who wants to do business with me has got to do it in a hurry. There are twelve or thirteen reasons why I want to marry you. One is you're a widow, so I won't mention the other two or three. You are experienced. You know a good thing when you see it. In getting a man like me you would be grateful.

AGNES
Well, Mr. Jiggins, you're not a bad sort of a fellow, taking you altogether.

VAN
Would you prefer taking me in sections?

AGNES
But then I need a little time for reflections.

VAN
Take all the time you want. (GENEROUSLY) I'll give you half an hour if necessary.

AGNES
Really you are generous.

VAN
Oh, there is nothing mean about me. I always like to give a girl a chance to say yes or no. (ENTER EDNA R. 3)

AGNES
(TO EDNA) I have been waiting to see you, dear. I want to have a few minutes chat with you. (LOOKS AT VAN) Alone!

VAN
That means for me to vamoose.

AGNES
I'll be very much obliged.

VAN
(GOES UP) When you want me. "Come into the garden, Maude"

AGNES
Maude?

VAN
Did I say, Maude? I meant Agnes. I was thinking of a pet mule I had in Colorado, the only female in a mining camp and her name was Maude. (EXITS WINDOW C.)

AGNES
He's a good fellow.

EDNA
I like him very much. (X'S TO SOFA L.)

AGNES

Edna, you are going away?

EDNA

Yes, to the city to take up a new life.

AGNES

Though we have not been very friendly I would wish that we part as friends and I trust you bear me no malice.

EDNA

No, only forgiveness.

AGNES

I believed there was a love affair between you and St. Elmo and it stirred a feeling of jealousy that drove me nearly mad. I paryed to conquer that feeling and I have mastered it. And now instead of hatred for you, I turn to you as a sister, to warn you against him. I was his first love. I was proud of it though if the truth were known it would place me beyond the pale of society.

EDNA

His mistress? And you confess that to me?

AGNES

Why not to you? St. Elmo would never marry any woman. He has no regard for the sanctity of the marriage tie. He scoffs it as being old-fashioned and out of date. Forgive me if I have hurt you, but I feel that I have only done my duty. May I call you sister? (GOES TO KISS HER)

EDNA

Please! Please don't touch me. Leave me! (X'S)

AGNES

Certainly, my dear. (GOES UP SMILING) I have sown the seed. (EXITS WINDOW C.)

EDNA

Shameless woman! She confessed to me her own infamy, her own degradation without one blush of shame, one word of regret. (ORGAN MUSIC AS IF FROM CHURCH BACK OF WINDOW. SHE LOOKS OUT) The little church across the way, the sacred anthem and the beautiful painting of Christ bearing his cross. The halo that radiates around the crown of thorns catches a glory that is dazzling. (ENTER ST. ELMO L. U. E. CLOSSES CURTAINS STANDS BILL ORGAN FINISHES STRAIN)

ST. ELMO

Edna!

EDNA

(STARTS IN ALARM. RECOVERS HERSELF) Oh, Mr. Murray, you have returned home to your sad and desolate mother. Oh for her sake I'm so glad. (STRUGGLES WITH FEAR AND PLEASURE)

ST. ELMO

Have you no word of welcome, no friendly hand to offer a man who has been wandering among strangers in a distant land? (PAUSE. SHE DOES NOT OFFER HER HAND HE SHRUGS SHOULDER) My mother? Is she well? Have you made her happy while I was far away?

EDNA

Your mother is very well indeed, but anxious and unhappy on your account and I think you will find her thinner and paler than when you last saw her.

ST. ELMO

Then you have not done your duty as I requested.

EDNA

I could not take your place, sir. I will go and inform her of your arrival.

ST. ELMO

(STERNLY) wait! (SHAKES HIS EYES WITH HIS HANDS AND LOOKS INTO EDNA'S EYES) When I left home I placed in your hand the key to my cameo cabinet exacting the promise that only one condition would you venture to open it. Those contingencies have not risen. Consequently there can be no justification for your having made yourself acquainted with the contents of the cabinet. I told you I trusted the key in your hands. I did not. I felt assured you would betray that confidence. It was not a trust; it was a temptation which I believe no girl or woman would successfully resist. I am here to receive an account of your stewardship, and I tell you now, I doubt you. I have no faith in you. Where is the key?

EDNA

(TAKES THE KEY FROM AROUND HER NECK WHICH IS ATTACHED TO A BLACK RIBBON) There is the key. (HANDS IT TO HIM) But of the contents of the cabinet I know nothing. It was ungenerous of you to tempt me as you did, to offer a premium as it were for a violation of secrecy by whetting my curiosity, then placing in my hands the means of gratifying it. I have often wished to know the contents of that cabinet, but I think I would have gone to the stake rather than violate my promise.

ST. ELMO

(HANDS ON HER SHOULDER. VOICE TREMBLING) Edna Earle, I give you one last chance to be truthful with me. If you have yielded to temptation be honest and confess.

EDNA

I have nothing to confess.

ST. ELMO

Can you look me in the eye and say you never put the key in the lock of my cabinet? Edna, more hangs on your word than you dream of. Be truthful as if indeed you were in the presence of the God you worship. I can forgive you for prying into my affairs, but I cannot and will not pardon you for trifling with me now.

EDNA

I have given you my most solemn assurances that I never unlocked it. Your suspicions are ungenerous and unjust, derogatory to you and insulting to me.

ST. ELMO

The proof is at hand and if I have indeed unjustly suspected you--atonement---full and simple shall be made. (HE GOES TO D. R. 2 OPENS IT) If you have faithfully kept your promise there will be an explosion when I open the cabinet. (HE EXITS. EDNA CLINGS TO BACK OF THE SOFA. A MOMENTS PAUSE. PISTOL SHOT IS HEARD OFF. SHE STARTS. HE ENTERS PALE. HAIR IN DISORDER, STAGGERS IN FRONT OF TABLE R.

LEAS LEANS AGAINST IT, HEAD ON BOSOM. SHE GOES TO HIM QUICKLY PUTS HER HAND ON HIS LEFT ARM)

EDNA

Mr. Murray, you are ill?

ST. ELMO

(SUDDENLY DRAWS HER CLOSE TO HIS SIDE) Edna, I have been ill for years. but I shall be better henceforth. I have tempted you and you stood firm, forgive my suspicions. My own pure Edna you are mine--mine!@

EDNA

You insult me by addressing such words to me. You--Agne's lover. Unwind your arms instantly--let me go. (SHE STRUGGLES)

ST. ELMO

(HIS CLASP TIGHTENS AND HE PRESSES HER CLOSE TO HIM) Agnes' lover! (LAUGHS) If you knew my whole history you would not think I had so meek and forgiving a spirit as to turn and kiss the hand that smote me.

EDNA

I know but little of your past, but I have learned enough of your illicit intrigues to know you are one not to be trusted. If you do not wish me to dispise you utterly, leave me at once.

ST. ELMO

On my honor as a man, I swear I love but one woman and you are that one.

EDNA

I do not believe you. You have no honor of what value is a man's oath who has no respect for religion. Your very word would perjure you.

ST. ELMO

When you know all, you will repent and blush for what you are saying now. You are blinded by jealousy. Don't turn your face away from me. Hear me to the end.

EDNA

No, I will hear nothing. Your touch is profanation. I care nothing for your love. I am only mortified and grieved. I would rather feel the coil of a serpent around my waist than your arm. (HE RELEASES HER)

ST. ELMO

(IN A VOICE FULL OF EMOTION BUT LOW) Edna, God is my witness that I am not decieving you. My words came from the depths of my heart. Will you listen to me?

EDNA

I will listen, but nothing you can say will change my opinion.

ST. ELMO

I ask you to listen and suspend your judgement till you know the circumstances. Do you realize that the man who died on Lookout was my Daman, my Jonathan, my idol. He was studying for the ministry and I had the church yonder built for him. I looked forward to the time I should see him standing in it's pulpit. (LOOKS OFF R.) I look now and see it filled with a hideous, mocking spectre.

EDNA

And because Agnes preferred him to you, your jealousy made you murder him.

ST. ELMO

No, I could have born the loss of her love, but the shock of the discovery of his duplicity, warped, distorted my whole nature. The knowledge that my idol was a thief killed my trust in human nature., my charity, my trust in God. I did not perase them with my vengeance. It was a chance meeting that night. I went out to see life, and as I hated the whole world with an intolerable murderous hate, to make my race suffer was the only real pleasure I found. I hated and deposed all women. I trampled their affection under my feet then laughed and gloried in the disolation I had wrought until I met you, Edna, and then love sprung from the bitter ashes of my dead affection.

EDNA

But Agnes--

ST. ELMO

We will not speak of her. She knows how utterly she has blasted my life and she imagines I never married because I loved her. But there is only one woman I love. One one woman who could ever be my wife and her name is Edna Earle. My heart is wholly yours.

EDNA

Your heart is not mine. It belongs to sin.

ST. ELMO

Edna, be my wife---tomorrow---today---now. Let me send for a minister. Look at me, Edna look at me. (SHE TRIES TO BREAK AWAY BUT FINDS IT IMPOSSIBLE. PRESSES BOTH HANDS TO HER FACE AND HIDES IT AGAINST HIS SHOULDER) My darling, I know what that means. You dare not look up because you cannot trust your own eyes, because you dread that I should see something you think it is your duty to conceal. Edna Earle, you love me.

EDNA

No! No! No! (GOES QUICKLY TO THE DOOR L. 3) You are mistaken. There can be no love between us unless your soul is purified through the love of God. (EXITS R. 3 AGNES ENTERS WINDOW C.)

AGNES

(GOES TO HIM NERVOUS) St. Elmo, you have returned!

ST. ELMO

Never to leave La Bodega again.

AGNES

I come to you, to entreat you by the memory of our early love to say that you forgive me for the suffering I have caused you.

ST. ELMO

I forgive you, Agnes. May God pardon your sins as he has pardoned mine.

AGNES

(TAKES HIM BY ARM FACING HIM) Do you mean what you say, there is happiness yet in store for us.. Oh, St. Elmo, how often have I longed to come and lay my head down upon your bosom and tell you all.

But you were stern and harsh. I was afraid. Ah, I have realized my folly. I see now the nobility of your nature which I failed to appreciate. I am saying to you what is hard for a woman to say, "Take me back to your heart" Gather me up in your arms as in the olden times because---because I love you now. Because only your love can make me happy. I never really preferred my cousin Murray to you---never--as God is my witness, as I love you now. Dearest, say, "Agnes, I will forgive all and trust you and love you as in the days long past. (TRIES TO EMBRACE HIM. HE PUTS HER FROM HIM AND HOLDS HER AT ARMS LENGTH)

ST. ELMO

Agnes, why attempt to deceive me after all that has passed between us? In the name of all true womanhood, I blush for you.

AGNES

(SOBBING) Don't look at me so harshly. I am not deceiving you. I do, I do love you. Believe me, won't you? You ought to know that I am terribly in earnest when I can stoop to beg for a heart which I once threw away and trampled upon.

ST. ELMO

Yes, Agnes, your treachery killed my love for you. You are dead to me.

AGNES

Oh, St. Elmo, have pity.

ST. ELMO

I hate, Agnes. Do not rouse my hate toward you which I am faithfully trying to overcome. Do not make me forget the vows I have taken upon myself in the presence of the world and my Maker, Agnes. Go yonder to the churchyard where I have spent so many hours of agony yonder to the grave of Murray Hammond, your victim as well as mine. down on your knees there and pray for yourself and may God help you. (EXITS R. 3 E.)

AGNES

(RISES LOOKS AFTER HIM, PAUSES TURNS TO L. GOING SLOWLY TOWARD L. MEETS VAN WHO COMES DOWN FROM WINDOW) Ah, you are here.

VAN

Oh yes I am here.

AGNES

I have been thinking.

VAN

I've been sort of thinkin' myself.

AGNES

I have been thinking that I will accept your offer and take your heart and hand.

VAN

You've got another think coming. You aint got no chance at all with me. Oh you perfidious "she woman" with the ossified gizzard and the "Ingy rubber" conscience, I seen you I heard you. You're scratched, you couldn't make a hit if you fell on top of me out of a balloon.

AGNES

Sir, are you insane?

VAN

I'm getting over it, and it is a good thing for me, before I fell a victim to your snares. Farewell, we shall meet never more. (VAN TURNS HIS BACK ON HER, ARMS FOLDED TRAGIC ATTITUDE)

AGNES

I will leave this place at once. I have lost the game. (EXITS L. 3)

VAN

By God, I got even. She's the fust girl I ever turned down. (EDNA ENTERS R. 3) Edna, where is St. Elmo?

EDNA

With his mother.

VAN

Don't he look fine? He's a great man now.

EDNA

(AT CHAIR NEAR TABLE) What do you mean, Van?

VAN

He's a preacher.

EDNA

(STAGGERS HOLD OF CHAIR) Do you mean a minister of the gospel?

VAN

Yep. He was ordained two weeks ago.

EDNA

Why was it kept a secret?

VAN

I reckon he wanted to surprise you all.

EDNA

Does he preache

VAN

Does he preach? I should say yes, and what's better, he practices what he preaches. He's going to give all his property to the poor. I'm going to be there. I'll get there early to avoid the rush. Say, Edna, you still look pretty good to me. You know with your education and my brains, boodle and beauty, we might pull well together. I'm sort of kind of thinkin' up some new things about water which will make the desert bloom and when Colorado is made a state I'm going to run for Governor.

EDNA

I wish you success, Van.

VAN

Yes, but I want you to share the success with me. Come to Colorado and be Mrs. Vanderdecken Jiggins.

EDNA

(SMILING) No--no, Van. I shall never marry.

VAN
I don't know why. It's a good habit, and you ought to get it.
(EDNA LAUGHS) There it is again. They all laugh at me. (GOES UP
TO WINDOW ENTER ST. ELMO R. 3 VAN SEES HIM BOWS AND EXITS WINDOW C.)

ST. ELMO

Edna.!

EDNA

(RISES. MURMURS) Mr. Murray, is it true that you are a minister of
thengospel?

ST. ELMO

It is. You remarked that there could be no love between us until
my soul was purified. God has pardoned all of my sins and accepted
me as a laborer worthy to enter his vineyard. Is Edna Earle more
righteous than the Lord?

EDNA

Mr. Murray--

ST. ELMO

Edna, do you refuse me forgiveness?

EDNA

(FILTERINGLY) Mr. Murray, you never wronged me; I have nothing to
forgive.

ST. ELMO

Do you still think me an unprincipled hypocrite?

EDNA

No! No! No!

ST. ELMO

Then you trust me? Can you be the wife of the man who loves you
devotedly. Can you be a minister's wife and aid him as only you
can?

EDNA

I do trust you, I trust you fully. (GOING TO HIM)

ST. ELMO

Then let us throw mournful years behind us, and make amends for
the wasted past, loving each other, aiding each other and serving
Him who has saved me from eternal sin. To thy merciful guidance
Oh father, we commit our future. (HE DRAWS HER TO HIS BREAST. SHE
LOOKS UP IN HIS FACE. ORGAN MUSIC)

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